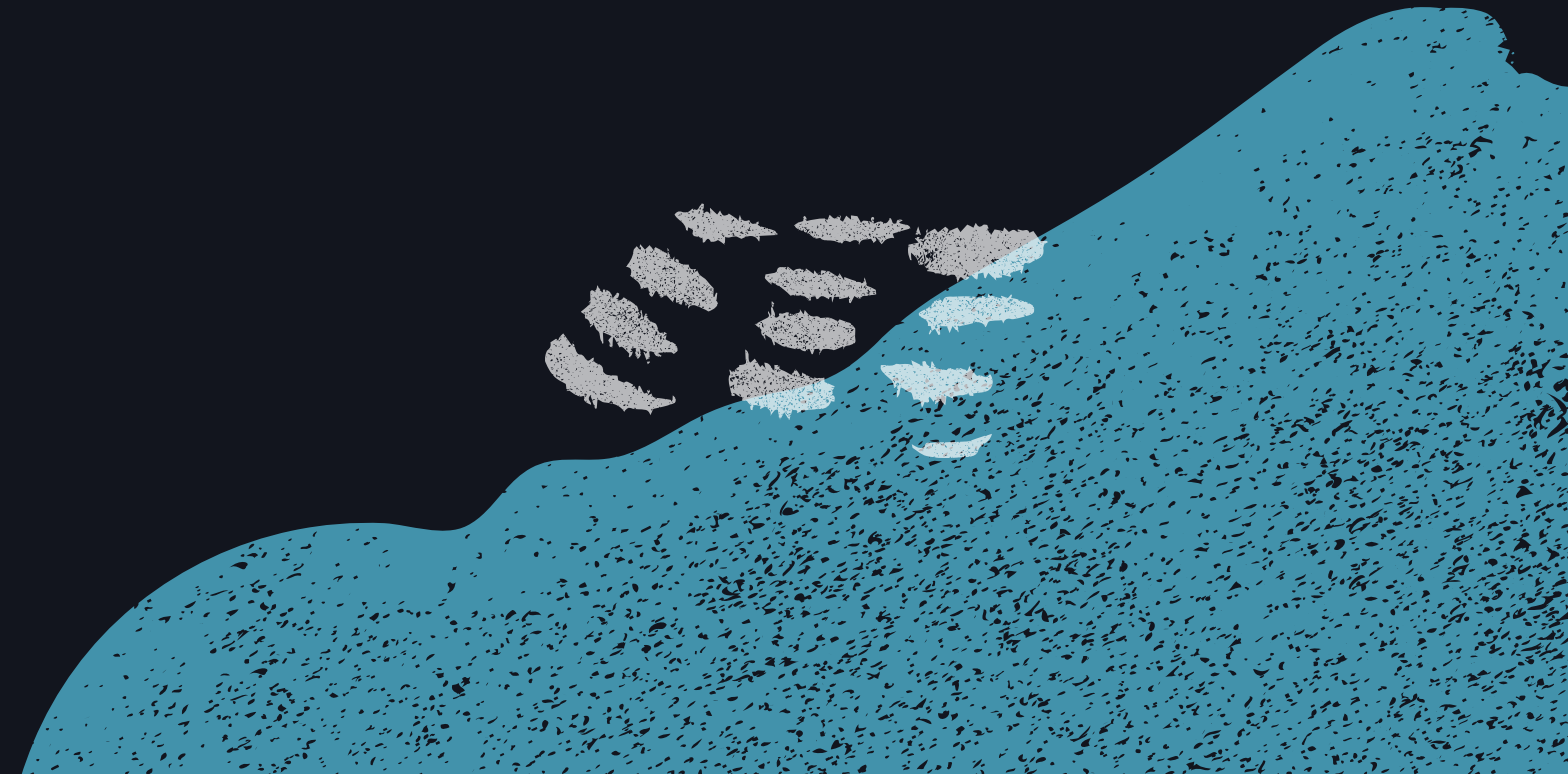


# Unresolved Trauma and Its Impact on Advocacy Work

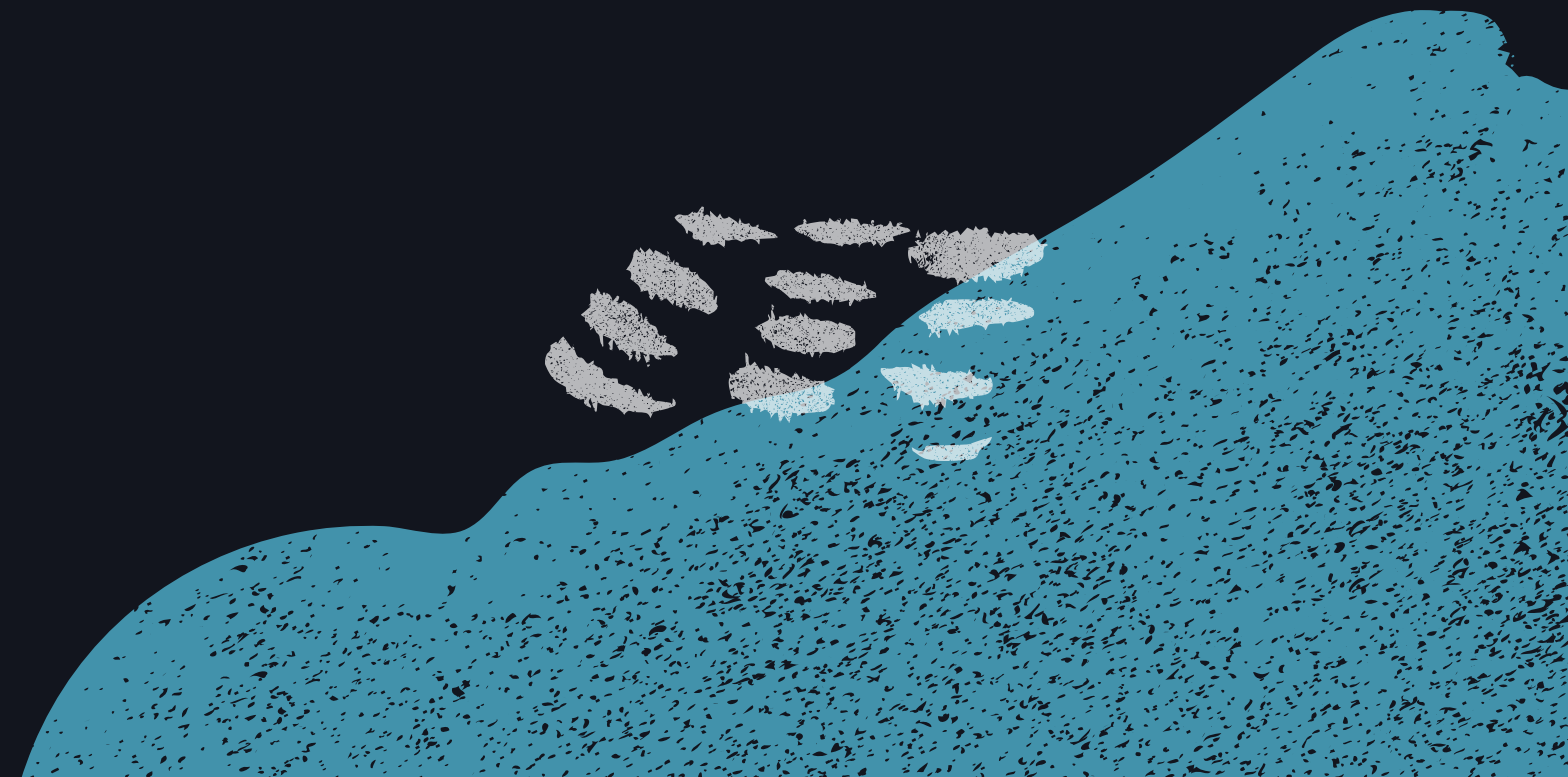
# Why this topic?

*I am passionate about addressing burnout in advocacy spaces and like to invite folks into imagining anti-capitalist, regenerative strategies that prioritize healing, resilience, and sustainable change.*



# Agenda

- Define the issue:
  - What is trauma?
  - Types of trauma
- Link between trauma and advocacy work
- Conclusion



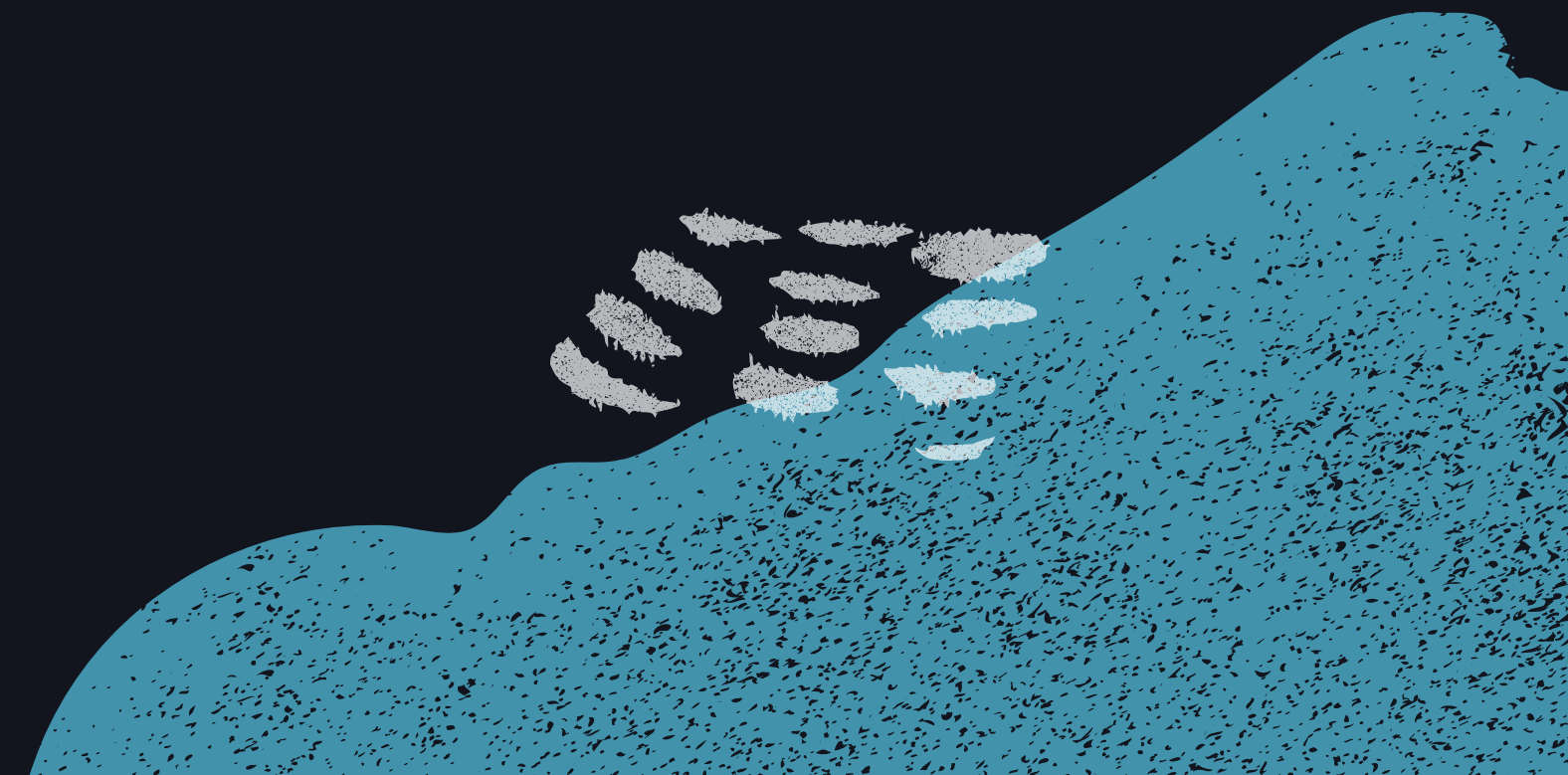
# Unresolved trauma: what it is and its effects (emotional, psychological, and behavioral)

## What is trauma?

- Protective response
- In Body and Nervous System
- Long-term dysregulation
- Overwhelms capacity to cope/adapt
- Physiological

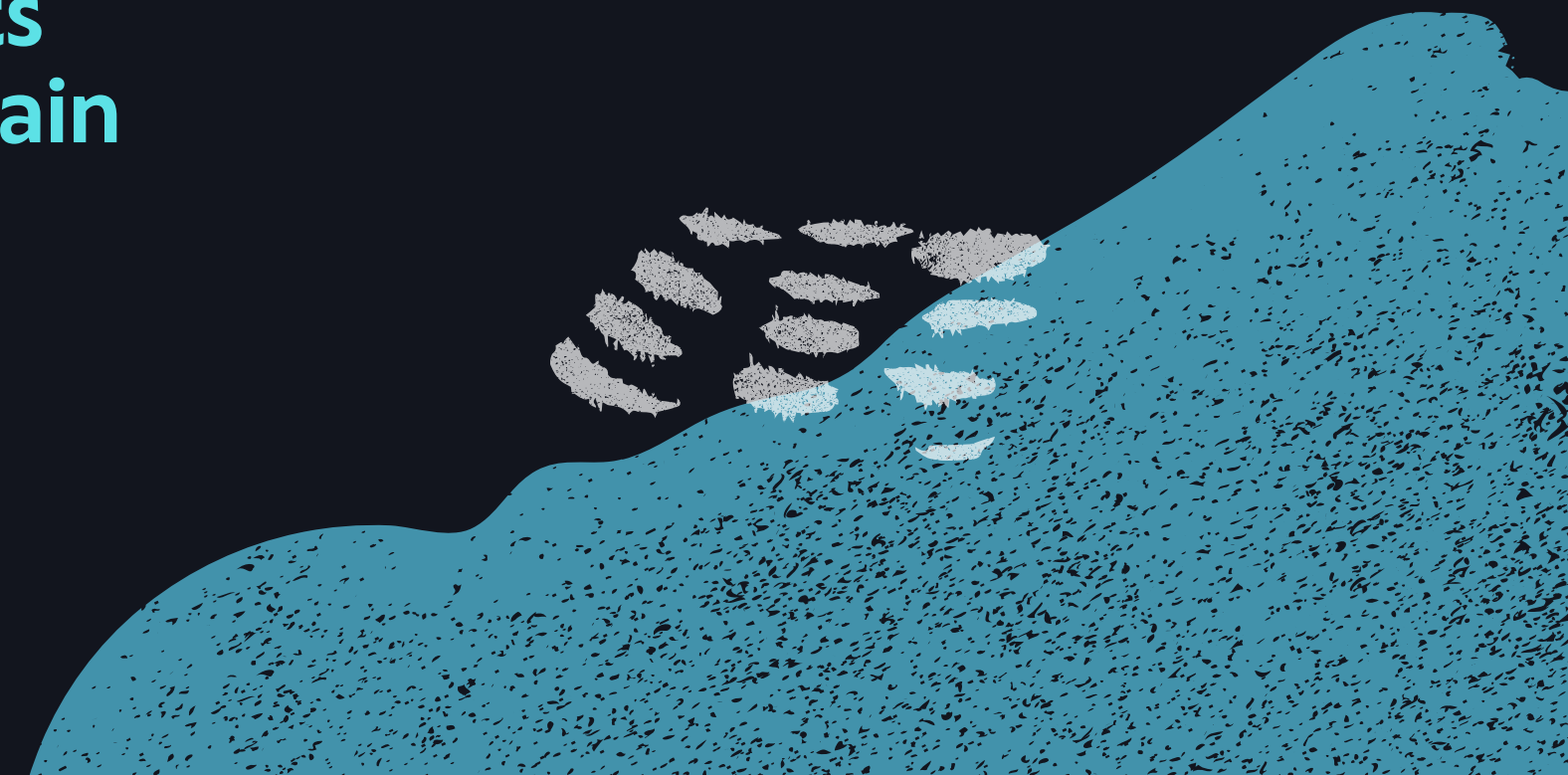
## What is NOT

- The event
- Cognitive
- The same for everyone



# Types of Trauma (culprit)

- **Acute:** single incident (natural disaster, car wreck, violent incident)
- **Chronic:** ongoing repeated stress and trauma that can happen in childhood or adulthood
- **Complex:** ongoing relational trauma where escape is not possible . Often developmental
- **Structural:** contextual features of environments and institutions that give rise to trauma, maintain it, and impact stress response



# The waters we swim in...

## Structural Trauma:

- Historical Trauma
- Body Shame
- Racism
- Homophobia
- Bias
- Socioeconomic Stress
- Institutions
- Educational System
- Politics
- Medical System
- Mental Health System
- Law Enforcement

The structure of society that impacts stress and safety and in an on-going basis and lives both inside the body/Nervous System and external world

*Unresolved Trauma inside the body is defined as the inability to regulate and integrate into present moment.*

**“Oppression is the organization and distribution of trauma throughout a community” - Prentis Hemphill**



# Trauma's impact in advocacy spaces

## The Body as a Site of Oppression and Resistance

Trauma lives in the body, just as oppression shapes the body's experience of safety and stress. Systems of oppression directly impact our physiological responses, leaving advocates vulnerable to chronic stress and burnout.

Advocacy rooted in trauma can unintentionally replicate oppressive dynamics, such as hierarchical leadership, perfectionism, or overwork.

Advocates often experience personal and collective trauma, both from the systems they fight against and from burnout in their work.

Unresolved trauma manifests as nervous system dysregulation, leading to emotional reactivity, conflict, or shutdowns. These can hinder collaboration, decision-making, and sustainability in advocacy efforts.



# Advocacy work from true capacity

Recognizing and addressing unresolved trauma allows advocates to center healing, resilience, and sustainability in their work.

A trauma-informed approach acknowledges the physiological and systemic impacts of trauma, creating spaces where advocates feel safe, empowered, and connected.

This approach shifts advocacy from solely addressing external systems of oppression to also prioritizing internal healing, fostering long-term capacity for change.

Emphasize the role of community-building, mutual aid, skill share and healing practices.





# Invitation to Align Advocacy with Nervous System Regulation

*Envision contributing to your cause while operating from a regulated nervous system, fully congruent with your values and aligned with your personal capacity. Advocacy becomes more sustainable when it emerges from a place of internal balance rather than overwhelm or urgency.*

*Center Personal Needs First:*

*Advocacy starts with self-care. Develop the skill of identifying and meeting your own needs before addressing external challenges. This ensures that your actions come from a place of fullness and agency, rather than depletion.*

*Incorporate Holistic and Ancestral Healing Practices:*

*Explore healing practices beyond the frameworks of Western medicine, such as ancestral healing, spiritual rituals, or cultural traditions. These practices can provide grounding, connection, and restoration, helping advocates process trauma and build resilience.*

